

Review of recent antivivisection literature



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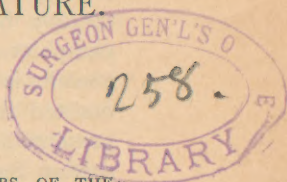
[REPRINTED FROM THE THERAPEUTIC GAZETTE, OCTOBER, 1885.]



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REVIEW OF RECENT

ANTIVIVISECTION LITERATURE.



ADDRESSES ON VIVISECTION BY MEMBERS OF THE
MEDICAL PROFESSION.

FACTS IN REGARD TO THE FAILURE OF THE BILLS
PRESENTED TO THE LEGISLATURE FOR THE RE-
STRICTION OF VIVISECTION.

SOME RECENT EXTRACTS FROM PUBLIC PRINTS WITH
REGARD TO EXPERIMENTS ON LIVING ANIMALS.

Published by the American Antivivisection Society.
Philadelphia, 1885.

THE most active of all of the antivivisection societies in this country is that which is known as the American Antivivisection Society, and we notice with great regret that much of the fermentation which it succeeds in provoking is due to the fact that certain persons more or less locally eminent in our own profession have lent to it whatever respectability they themselves may possess. Upon returning from our summer vacation we found upon the table several recent publications of this society, of which we shall briefly notice two. One of these is a small pamphlet with the title "Facts in regard to

the Failure of the Bills presented to the Legislature for the Restriction of Vivisection." The charge in this pamphlet is that Drs. S. Weir Mitchell and H. C. Wood, after agreeing with the committee of the Antivivisection Society that they would favor a certain bill regulating vivisection, went to Harrisburg and violently opposed its passage, thereby breaking faith. There are in the pamphlet of the society inaccuracies, but especially is there a *suppressio veri*. The facts omitted from the account are : First, the bill presented to the Legislature by the Antivivisection Society's committee had been essentially altered after it had been accepted by Dr. H. C. Wood at the conference. Second, the bill had been agreed upon as a compromise, which should end all further discussion of the subject ; but the persons chosen by the society to represent it at Harrisburg distinctly stated that they would not be satisfied by the bill, but would continue the agitation. Third, the gentlemen who represented the medical profession even under these circumstances did not oppose the act voluntarily, but simply did not support it ; and were about to leave the legislative committee-room when they were called back and squarely asked by the chairman of the legislative committee if they really and honestly thought such a bill was needed in Pennsylvania. Were these gentlemen to reply to the chairman falsely and say they thought the bill was required when they knew it was not ? As honest men, the only answer they could make was to tell why they had consented to a bill similar to but not identical with that before the committee, and ex-

press their opinion that vivisection is not abused in Pennsylvania, and that consequently no law is really required.

The second pamphlet is "Addresses on Vivisection by Members of the Medical Profession." To review it at length and point out its misstatements would be a waste of our time and that of our readers. These addresses are not solely or chiefly occupied with abstract discussions of the subject involved, but largely with bitter personal attacks on well-known members of the profession, who, although not named, are so pointed out that any one who reads can tell where the thrusts are aimed. Moreover, names are given in the continuation of the discussion in the newspapers, and the utmost endeavor made to destroy whatever of influence or of standing the persons who are attacked have in the community. Under these circumstances, we can hardly notice the addresses in an impersonal manner. Upon the character of an accuser largely depends the gravity of the accusation.

To impugn the motives of those who have done what they could in this way to arrest the progress of medical science is not our purpose ; but we call attention to that curious phase of human nature which allows a person in other matters conscientious to put himself forward as a public teacher, although his own ignorance of the subject may be as dense as the darkness of the Egyptian plague. The man who steps upon the rostrum and claims the position of a leader without having prepared himself for such, is simply guilty of a crime ; the injury which he inflicts upon his fellows may not be as palpable as that of the brute

who strikes down his victim openly, but may be much more far-reaching, and much more deadly. If the responsibility of such a self-constituted leader is great, how heavy is that of the man who uses his professional and social position, due to accidents of birth or other causes, and whatever little of public prominence he may have acquired, to injure the personal character of his colleagues and to defame the whole profession ! These are the sins, and these are the responsibilities of most of the authors of these addresses.

In the address of Dr. Owen J. Wister we read, "a distinguished physiologist of this city was unable to convince himself that heat would kill until he had repeated the experiments of Bernard, of baking animals to death, euphemistically called sunstroke." The facts of the case are : that the American experiments were made to find out *how* heat kills ; were in great part performed before the publication of those of Dr. Bernard ; were not fac-similes of his, covered different ground, and led to different conclusions ; and that the roasting consisted in exposing animals to a temperature of 120° to 130° F. : further, these American experiments have led not only to correct views, but also to unanimity of opinion in the profession as to the nature of sunstroke, as is indicated by the very general use, the world over, of the name invented by the "distinguished physiologist" as expressive of the pathology of the disease.

To those exposed to the personal attacks of Dr. Wister it is comforting that little is to be feared from a man whose emotional extravagance and faith in the infallibility of his

own prejudices lead him to write that "the hangman must be consulted" for the purpose of limiting the use of cold water in typhoid fever, a treatment which has saved thousands of lives, and is now used by a large proportion, probably a majority, of European physicians of the first class. There is a homely but wise old saying, "give him enough rope and he will hang himself." In this case the Antivivisection Society apportioned a sufficiency.

One of the most ferocious of these addresses is that of Dr. James E. Garretson, a gentleman who holds a chair in a medical college and writes books on philosophy. In his address he says, "I boldly declare that the *last decade* has given the profession but a single new remedy worthy of naming, and this remedy is the familiar bromide of potassium." Every one who chooses to read the standard books on therapeutics knows that, as long ago as 1828, Dr. Pourché brought forward the bromide of potassium as a remedy in practical medicine, and in 1849 M. Ramez described with sufficient detail the peculiar symptoms produced by its use in very large doses. The drug was officinal in the Lóndon Pharmacopœia of 1840, and was introduced into the United States Pharmacopœia in 1850, since which time it has been a standard remedy.

Is public sentiment to be led by the statements of a medical Rip Van Winkle, who, awakening himself from a sleep of thirty years, announces that the bromide of potassium is a remedy introduced in the last *decade*, and who has apparently never heard of the important remedies which have become known to practi-

cal medicine since the introduction of the bromide of potassium? Perhaps by the twentieth century he will have heard of chloral, the new cinchona alkaloids, salicylic acid, jaborandi, pilocarpin, nitrite of amyl, etc., all fresher remedies than the bromide. May he live to grow eloquent upon these as the then new remedies of the last decade.

It is not surprising that Dr. Garretson says, "My diploma dates from the year 1859. I have been nearly all these years a teacher of anatomy and of surgery; and if anything especially new or good has been evolved from vivisection which could not, equally well, have been learned after another manner, I, as a teacher of surgery for many years, do not know it." "*I* do not know it." Why should he know it? Graduating in 1859, writing in 1885 of a remedy introduced in 1850 as one of the last decade, it is not surprising that he has not heard of antiseptic surgery or of the journey of its discoverer to the continent of Europe in order to complete his researches without interference from antivivisectionists.

Banter aside, it is plain that Dr. Garretson is honest, with the honesty of ignorance, and that he really does not apprehend the resources of modern medicine. But when he says he has seen a dog looking at him beseechingly in the laboratory, with great tears coursing down its face, we feel that, though with him the charms of philosophy may entice from medical study, the vivid imagination of the poet misleads the eyesight.

As already stated, we do not propose to follow in detail the various misstatements made in the book of addresses; one more quotation

and we are through. Dr. William R. D. Blackwood, in defiance of all codes, hesitates no more than do his colleagues in attempting to injure in the community, and through the newspapers, the professional standing of those who practise vivisection. He says, "I affirm that vivisectioners are less capable of managing such diseases than an ordinarily intelligent physician, and that statistics will prove these men visionary in their ideas, prejudiced in their aim, and illogical in their conclusions." He says this too in the face of the fact that when his own child was ill nigh unto death he sent for practical aid to the "distinguished physiologist" (of Dr. Wister), who now holds a handsome piece of plate given to him by Dr. Blackwood, as a token of gratitude to him for (as Dr. Blackwood asserted) saving the life of the child. It is also worthy of remark that the measures used were those the knowledge of whose value was obtained by "roasting animals,"—those too for whose employment Dr. Wister counsels the "hangman's rope."

Is it a wonder that, with counsellors and advocates so pitifully frantic as the authors of the addresses before us, the Antivivisection Society mired itself so deeply in the slough of complete disrepute at the last session of the Pennsylvania Legislature?

